

Empty Cargo Containers

How empty containers are sent overseas

Because the United States imports more goods than it exports, many empty containers are sent overseas to be refilled with goods. Typically, about a third of the containers loaded onto a ship at the Port of Long Beach will be filled with cargo, while about two-thirds will be empty. This diagram shows the movement of empty containers after the delivery of full, imported containers to local businesses and/or transload facilities. Intermodal containers returning to the local area empty are not depicted; they would enter the system at the marine terminal or empty container storage yard.

1 Delivery to local exporter

A local exporter who needs to fill empty containers may arrange to receive them by truck directly from a marine terminal, from an empty container storage yard or from a local importer. Direct delivery between importers and exporters is encouraged because it eliminates an additional truck trip to a storage yard or marine terminal.

1

Local exporter

2

Empty container storage yard

3

3 Direct Delivery

The simplest route for an empty cargo container would be a return trip to the Port from a transload facility or local importer after its imported goods had been unloaded.

2 Empty container storage yard

Empty containers are often transported by truck from a transload facility or local importer to an empty container storage yard. From the storage yard, the empty containers can be transported to a marine terminal for export, or to a local exporter to be filled with cargo. Empty containers are also transported from marine terminals to storage yards, usually when the terminal needs more space for full, incoming containers.

4 Ocean Vessel

Empty containers are loaded onto an ocean vessel, along with containers filled with export goods, bound for an overseas port.

4

Marine terminal

Transload or local importer

PACIFIC OCEAN

CONTAINER MOVEMENT

TRUCK WITH
EMPTY MARINE
CONTAINER



Virtual Container Yard

The Port is actively promoting the use of a computerized management technique for empty containers known as the "virtual container yard." The virtual container yard links local importers and exporters through

an online clearing house. This effort increases the direct exchange of empty containers outside of the Port, and reduces the need for additional truck trips to and from storage yards and marine terminals.